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THE FAMILY

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE SECTION ON THE FAMILY AND THE
COMMUNITY AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHARITIES
AND CORRECTION, BALTIMORE, MAY 15, 1915



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THE ETHICS OF THE FAMILY
BY JAMES HAYDEN TUFTS

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THE point of view of the student at the present time in approaching such a problem as that of the ethics of the family makes his task less simple than that of old. He cannot depend upon an infallible intuition or an infallible deduction. He must consider consequences, on the one hand, and psychology of men and women, on the other; he must consider social conditions and the evolution of human personality. Doubtless there are seemingly constant factors—the thrill of passion and the necessity of rational control; the love of mother for child and of child for mother; the effects of habit and the power of social convention; the conflict between individual choice and public opinion—all these in a sense reappear in generation after generation. They claim their place in any treatment, but love between the sexes has been made in many respects a different thing because of all that fiction and poetry, as well as church and state, have done to it. Recently the industrial revolution, the conditions of city life, the progress of higher education, the general movement toward emancipation of woman, have combined so to change both the controlling conditions of human life and the mental attitudes and temper of men, women, and children, that the problems long since comfortably and confidently settled clamor for reconsideration. Ethics may or may not reach conclusions as to marriage, divorce, economic dependence of woman, parental responsibility, distinction between legitimate and illegitimate birth, which agree with the judgments of the past, but no ethics can simply reaffirm these past judgments without noting the changed personalities and changed conditions.

We may well recognize, first of all, that instead of the ethics of the family, we might more properly speak of the ethics of families, for the ethical questions which are really uppermost in the middle class family of to-day are very different from those

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which are at the front in the working-class family. Nevertheless, there are some general considerations which apply to both.

Moralists sometimes make a distinction between positive and negative morality. Positive morality offers values: negative morality says "Thou shalt not!" There is perhaps no field of ethics which in the past has had a point of view more prevailingly negative than the morals of the family.

(1) It has said little about a duty to marry, but much against sexual relations except in marriage; little about a right choice, much about divorce.

(2) It has said little as to the positive value of children, but has tabooed such questions as restriction or illegitimacy.

(3) Since the whole sexual nature is so liable to become the cause of evil, it has urged that we know and talk as little about it as possible; that we do not mention to a girl any of the unpleasant possibilities of communicable disease; that we bring up children upon the basis that innocence is the only virtue for the young, and that there is in any case no positive value in at least the physical side of love.

We are not entirely satisfied with this negative morality. It doesn't work well in several particulars. Some of the facts which challenge attention are the following:

(1) There is a small and decreasing birth-rate among the educated classes, which means, unfortunately, that these classes are constantly passing out from our population. In this country some of us, at least, believe that the stock which settled in New England and moved on into New York and the middle west was a good stock. We do not like to see it disappear, but it certainly is disappearing, and relatively to other stocks it will, according to present indications, be less and less influential in the future life of the country.

(2) There is increasing divorce.

(3) There is in some parts of the western world increasing illegitimacy. This may or may not be true for this country, since we have so little accurate registration that it is difficult to know, but in certain European countries the increase, particularly in large cities, is striking. In Berlin, between the years 1891 and 1909, legitimate births decreased 19 per cent (from 47,000

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to 38,000); illegitimate increased 39 per cent, and are now at the rate of about one in five of all births.

(4) The double standard of morals persists, and prostitution as a profitable commercial enterprise is as strong as ever.

(5) The "social diseases" are far too prevalent.

(6) Various social agencies find so many of their problems thrust upon them by bad family conditions that the waste and expense of the situation are becoming increasingly evident. The defective children, the retarded children in the schools, the weak who swell the number of prostitutes, the boy criminals in our large cities, the deserted wives and children, the family troubles which come to light in our juvenile courts and courts of domestic relations, all tell of failures which may or may not be out of proportion to what should be expected in any human institution, but are, at any rate, sufficiently numerous to be a challenge to our existing ethics.

(7) Finally, the vast literature upon various aspects of the woman question reflects the friction which may not find outlet in the courts or the charities, but which, none the less, is very real in certain classes of families.

Negative morality had good reasons for many of its prohibitions, and when there was no reason that we may now wish to call a good reason, there was at least an explanation. Passion needed and always will need stern limits set by reason, by authority, and by public opinion for the protection of both men and women, and particularly for the protection of women. There is also an element of true psychology in the taboos which the race has fixed upon excessive attention to the sexual life. While the original motive for these taboos may very likely have been in large part fear of contracting feminine weakness or fear of the ghosts that might be presumed to hover about at such a time as the birth of a child, there is, no doubt, a certain instinctive modesty which is one of the strongest supports to chastity and purity and which should not be broken down. Besides these valid reasons, there are special explanations for our inherited attitude. When people lived in small towns and knew each other intimately from childhood; when parents knew the habits of their neighbors' children almost as well as those of their own, and when daughters

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could have the parents' advice, there was no such tendency to hasty marriages between persons who had had scarcely any opportunity to become acquainted as now exists in the large cities. Under such conditions, too, there was probably far less communicable disease. On the other hand, there was no need of especially inculcating the duty of marriage or the desirability of raising children. When no other way of support lay open to women, the pressure was strong in the direction of marriage. When people live largely an agricultural life, children are very little added expense, and are not only a joy, but frequently a great help to their parents in the house and on the farm. Among higher classes the importance of maintaining the family name and transmitting family wealth was a strong inducement which seems still to operate, especially in royalty and in the country families of Europe; but there is no great sentiment about passing down the family flat, and indeed the absence of any such family tradition is well suggested by the question of the child of one of my colleagues, when passing by a house where the parents had lived—"Is this one of the houses where I was born?" But there were other grounds less rational. The double standard, the harsh inequalities before the law, are survivals of military and aristocratic society. The sex taboos are in part due to outgrown superstitions, to crude beliefs about original sin, to degrading doctrine about woman.

Besides the failures of negative morality, there are certain new values which demand recognition.

(1) For the middle class family the great factor is undoubtedly the new consciousness of personal rights, powers, and interests on the part of women. We cannot expect to have higher education, new avenues of achievement, new means of economic support, new possibilities of freedom, and still retain the special type of monogamy which was characteristic of earlier civilization, and especially of a civilization which in many ways was brutal in its restraint upon woman. Reinforcing these is the extraordinary industrial change which has taken the productive work from woman, has made her a consumer, and has made it difficult, if not impossible, for her to maintain, on the one hand, her activity as an intellectual or executive person, and, on the other, her position as wife and mother.

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(2) The second great positive value is the new recognition of the child. Our vast public school system, originally organized for protection to the state, is now definitely valued as an instrument for giving the child an opportunity to make the most of himself and to develop his powers. Great advances in medical science have restricted infantile diseases and magnified the general esteem of the importance of every human life. Societies for the care of orphans or neglected children, juvenile courts, associations of nurses, are indices of a growing conscience. This increased valuation upon children is not satisfied to continue the old proverb which Ezekiel contended against more than two thousand years ago: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Our older theology sent children unbaptized to limbo or to hell because of their parents' omissions or of the ancestral sin. For some time theology has balked at attributing such a destiny to the infant, but we are yet very slow about going the whole way. We have thus far hesitated to give the child a fair chance irrespective of his parents. We have assumed that the child born in a very poor family cannot expect good sanitation or opportunity for healthful play, or as good an education as the child born to the well-to-do. In the case of the illegitimate child we have been even more chary. But if I am not mistaken, the next generation will look for some way to control and, if necessary, punish reckless sex relations without visiting positively upon the children the iniquity of the fathers.

(3) A third new value is that of the positive significance of sex and of motherhood. There has, of course, always been a literature of motherhood, and individuals have valued their own experiences as mothers or as children, but so much of the older valuation has been associated with limitations upon the life and activity of woman that it is not surprising to find certain writers minimizing the significance of sex in woman's life. They claim that sex has been exaggerated. They would settle the conflict between home and industry by encouraging women to enter gainful occupations. They would make motherhood incidental, rather than principal, in determining woman's plan of living. In contrast with these proposed solutions, which magnify the value of independent occupation and productive work in the world of

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industry or commerce, Ellen Key is distrustful of the effect upon woman's life of organized industry, and seeks a new appreciation of woman's sex life. It is not necessary to decide that all women must conform to one pattern, but taking woman as a whole, and taking business and industry as now organized, I should side with Ellen Key as contrasted with the opposing school. For a minority of women the path of freedom and development may lie through independent economic activity, and in case they have families, through such systematized care for children as would free the mother for her intellectual or active pursuits outside, but for the majority I believe that greater happiness, as well as fuller development, lies rather in magnifying family values and freeing them from the survivals of subordination, of unscientific and ill-organized methods, which belong to former days.

(4) The fourth positive value which demands recognition in the ethics of the family is the value of sound, healthy, and well-reared stocks, not merely for the individuals whose enjoyment and achievement are concerned, but for the community and the state. The pendulum swings back and forth between nature and nurture, between the importance of well-bred children and the importance of good environment. Just at present biology is laying great stress upon the former. With its Mendelian law as an instrument of analysis, biology is certainly bringing before us more forcibly than ever the importance of heredity. And as we are learning to think in terms not merely of to-day, but of to-morrow, not merely of the local community, but of the nation, we are gaining a new consciousness of the tremendous value to society of certain stocks. If anything was needed to reënforce this biological truth, the lessons of the war are fulfilling that task. It was the Boer war that awakened England to the deterioration of her population in physical stature. The present war has been a tremendous object-lesson of the value of giving thought to health and fitness. It is even conceivable that it may make its lesson so impressive as in a measure to reclaim from other forms of wastage the frightful waste of the best stock which it is itself displaying.

These four new values—the value of women's freedom and development, the value of the child, the value of sex and especially

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of motherhood, and, lastly, the value of sound stock well reared for national life and for the life of the world—must be reckoned with in the new ethics of the family. We can no longer meet the situation by taboos and negations, by ascetic restraints or sentimental gush, nor by mere appeals to authority or reiterations of past conventions. We must look forward and think of the family in its larger relations. If we retain its essential features, it must be because they respond to these positive values and not because they have come down from the past.

What are the lines along which our ethical consciousness is likely to move in recognizing these new values? Is it likely to shift in the direction of free love, so called, in the direction of economic independence for women, in the direction of less of family care and more of public care and control?

The challenge to existing institutions comes partly on the ground of personal freedom. "Of all dogmas, monogamy has been that which has claimed most human sacrifices." It comes partly on the ground that many women have no opportunity for marriage, whether this is due to such general urban conditions as increased living expenses, or to such special conditions as the larger relative number of women in certain European cities. Many are thus excluded from life's greatest experience, from its greatest moral opportunity. Resenting these constraints and limitations, some would abolish the double standard by having woman adopt man's standard rather than, as is more commonly advocated, by having man adopt woman's. Others would shift toward freer divorce or toward increasing responsibility toward children, and sanctioning as moral any union which recognizes its responsibility in this respect. In contrast with present marriages, which are too often commercial or legal only, it is claimed that unions based on love and such responsibility for children would give better children and insure more genuinely moral relations.

It is scarcely probable that society will change the double standard by adopting what is meant in this connection by the man's standard. Even if the stricter standard for woman was originally based largely on property conceptions, it has, none the less, proved its right, not by increasing man's privileges, but by establishing woman's dignity. There is, however, one qualification

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on the other side. The reader of Forel and Havelock Ellis will not hastily assume that woman's standard is necessarily perfect in all respects. It has been remarked that men sometimes think they are growing virtuous, when in fact they are merely growing old. It is possible that sometimes sex indifference is mistaken for a positive virtue instead of being regarded as a defect—as it is from the point of view of family life.

As regards proposals for freer unions regulated by responsibility for children, no one who reads Ellen Key, the ablest representative of this doctrine, can fail to recognize that a profound appreciation of woman's personality and of the importance of the child underlies her thought. The belief that the way out lies in the direction of emphasizing, rather than minimizing, the importance of sex and motherhood in woman's life will commend itself to many biologists and psychologists. Her insistence that moral progress lies along the lines of increasing the consciousness of responsibility for the child, and that this increasing responsibility, if taken seriously, would mean a higher level of family life than is found in perhaps the majority of cases, will be recognized by the moralist as in accord with the general line of moral progress from external to inner responsibility. The defects in her treatment, as I see them, are due to an inadequate psychology of love and to an overemphasis upon the individual aspect of personality. "A person can, therefore, no more promise to love or not to love than he can promise to live long" is her statement. This regards love as chiefly an emotion entirely out of control of choice and will. It makes this emotion the test of the morality of the sex relations; it believes this to be the best guarantee of the birth of better children. I conceive this to be bad psychology. Undoubtedly the thrill of emotion is only partially subject to control. None of us may be able to avoid the quiver of fear when thunder crashes, or the beginnings, at least, of anger at outrageous treatment; but we say it is the achievement of character to control these emotions, and the brave man stays at his post in spite of thunder. Conversely, the will may indirectly do much to control the conditions under which emotion is likely to be felt. The man who looks too long may get involved beyond the power to stop, but the man of character will know when to stop, and will avoid situations that

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are dangerous. And, on the positive side, love stands for much more than emotion. It is the resolute purpose to seek another's good. Such resolute purpose can be maintained even when physical attractiveness wanes and the thrill of emotion no longer is hot in the blood. It will show itself in crises of sickness or great need, although in the every-day round of events it may easily be subconscious. Such a purpose and the gradual effect of habit in adjusting personalities to each other, so that as ideas, joys, and sorrows are shared a companionship far more stable in its basis than the passion of youth supervenes, is the psychological ground for the moral ideal of life-long marriage. And when we add to this the importance to the child of two parents, rather than one, we have the basis on which, in the great majority of cases, the institution in substantially its present form is, I believe, likely to remain as the ideal.

But even could love be so controlled, Key holds it ought not to be: The life-tree of a human being, in her opinion, is like the trees of the forest, not like those of a formal garden. "Its beauty depends upon the freedom of the boughs to take unexpected curves." "One branch unexpectedly shoots out and another unaccountably withers." Personality is the ultimate test of moral value, and "unconditional fidelity to one person may be just as disastrous to the personality as unconditional continuance in a faith or an employment."

This is a half-truth. Unconditional fidelity to one who, by persistent adultery, cruelty, debauchery, makes decency, self-respect, and proper conditions for children impossible, if it is ever justifiable as an act of voluntary renunciation in certain exceptional cases, is no general principle of ethics and ought not to be required by law. The time is soon coming when an awakened conscience will regard venereal disease as an axiomatic bar to cohabitation, and unless innocently contracted, as ground for divorce. But to admit and insist that fidelity under such conditions is not demanded by good ethics is very different from setting up as our standard the trees of the forest. Civilization, after all, is a garden. No one may consider his own needs apart from his dependence upon all and the dependence of others upon him. Many a branch which might grow in a forest must be cut in a

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garden. Personality, in its profound meaning, is indeed an ethical standard; but this meaning requires us to consider not merely impulses and tides of emotion, no matter how clamorous, but also the values of poise and self-control, of high-minded justice and scrupulous reverence for other personalities.

The fact is that there are certain fundamental instincts and ideal needs in man and woman which are better met by the exclusive relation of man and woman, and by their permanent relation, except under special circumstances, fairly well provided for by present laws. There is an instinct of jealousy, or at least a sentiment, in the average man and woman which is exclusive and does not tolerate a divided affection. The story told by a settlement worker is true in large part to human nature. A woman came into a New York settlement house, and while waiting for an interview attracted the notice of a resident passing through the room. The resident spoke to one of the other neighbors and said, "What is the matter with that woman over there? She doesn't look happy." "No," said the neighbor, "she ain't. She's married and has a good husband, but he lives with another woman and it annoys her." When we add the fundamental need of the child for two parents, not merely for life's beginning, but for life's development; and finally when we add the need which the parents, on their side, have not merely for provision and care of infancy and children, but also for the friendships and renewing contacts with youth, we have the main reasons why the ethical ideal of exclusive and permanent unions is likely to maintain itself.

But while the general form of the family may remain, it is necessary to direct emphasis upon its positive values, rather than upon the negative. It is much more important to insist that the right parties marry, than to insist that married persons shall never separate. If we emphasize negations, let us at least place them where they will be of most use. It is more important, under existing conditions, to provide against marriage which will communicate disease, against hasty marriages, against marriages which can never hope to bring sound, healthy children into the world, than to allow such people to marry indiscriminately and then inveigh against the evils of divorce. And even these preventions can

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be made effective only by providing positive agencies, social, economic, educational, for promoting right marriages.

So far as children are concerned, evidently the emphasis required for the middle class and professional family is different from that required for the working-class family. The former tend to marry too late and to have too few children—the latter to have too many. The ethical emphasis for the former needs rather to be placed upon the larger social significance which the family has for community life. Our old negative morality is helpless here. In placing the family morals so largely upon certain ascetic conceptions of sex, or in trusting economic pressure upon woman to induce her to marry, the older morality could offer no counter-active to the modern woman's love of freedom, to the opportunity for self-support, and to the modern man's financial ambitions or love of ease. City conditions complicate the problem by their tendency to postpone marriage. The census figures show that in the city out of one hundred between the ages of twenty and twenty-four there are seventy-two single and twenty-six married, as compared with sixty-two single and thirty-six married in the country. Between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine we find in the city forty-four single and fifty-four married, and in the country thirty-five single and sixty-two married. This postponement is due in part to greater cost of beginning a home, in part to the desire on the part of young people to begin in a more ambitious way, owing to the patterns of expensive living constantly before them, and in part it may be to the greater difficulty in making acquaintance on the part of those who have come to the city from other districts, and to the superior opportunities for comfort in single life which the city affords; yet a further factor in the case of many is the inability of the middle-aged and older members of the family, under modern industrial and commercial conditions, to support themselves, and the consequent burden imposed upon the younger members. All these factors make against family life. They work against the entrance upon family life at an age when there is greater plasticity; they tend to place a greater strain upon the chastity of young men, and to unfit them for fidelity in their later marriage relations. Nor is the effect upon young women less present, though in different fashion. The longer marriage is

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postponed after the normal period of say twenty-one to twenty-five, the less inclination is likely to exist for it, the less the power of adaptation to its conditions, and, in the case of women employed in many occupations, the less likely is the physical condition suited to find delight in motherhood.

"Why has Mr. Smith changed his occupation from railroading to work in a bank when he seemed to be so much interested in the former?" asked a lady of one of her acquaintances who was himself in the railroading business. "I am afraid I am responsible for that," was the reply. "I told him that if he stayed in the railroading business he could not marry until he was thirty-five." I remarked to the lady that this seemed to me to imply a very exaggerated standard of what was necessary for marriage. "Yes," she answered, "it is a pity that young people should think so much of pleasure as to miss happiness."

But it is not merely missing happiness. For those who are sound and clean, strong and vigorous, it is their great opportunity of service to the future of their country and its ideals. We must think more of the larger issues involved.

Among the working-class families the ethical problem is very different. It is not a demand for greater freedom, but for greater responsibility, which is heard most often in the courts of domestic relations. In the experience of social workers the great complaint is that of failure to support or of outright desertion. In many cases there is too strong a correlation between rapid births and rapid deaths to be ignored. If, therefore, one is to help the morals of the working-class family, the raising of the standard of living is evidently the most hopeful line of attack, whether this takes the individual form of better training and education of both boys and girls, or the form of public control of housing and sanitation, of public insurance for unemployment, accident, and illness, and ultimately of a juster distribution of gains.

Should the poor be taught also directly how to limit the number of children? This is a point actively in dispute at the present time. American law makes such instruction a criminal offense. In England information is open to any married persons. In France there is no restriction. Many writers are strongly opposed as to the ethics of the problem. Forel is as decided upon

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one side as Foerster upon the other. On the one hand, it is urged that all the so-called upper classes have knowledge and act upon it, and that the present excessive birth-rate among the poor keeps them in poverty, causes ill health of mothers, and increases infant mortality to a shocking degree. On the other hand, it is urged as strongly that the proposed remedy is worse than the disease, since it proposes to free men from the necessity of any control over their senses. One point is agreed upon by both parties, that there are evils in the present situation, and that, as the standard of living rises, the family tends to assume a size which gives the best opportunity for the health and care of all concerned. Finally, as we have noted, the standard often rises too high, and the family passes out of existence. Perhaps the happy medium is more likely to be secured if we place our emphasis upon the positive values of health and opportunity for both mothers and children, if we aim primarily to raise the level of intelligence and consideration. Excessively large families are not the rule after the first or second generation of immigrants.

Will the new ethics of the family favor a more closely knit economic unit or a greater economic independence of the woman? Will the tendency be for the woman to enter more and more the field of production, or should stress rather lie upon a better scientific knowledge for consumption and home work? Shall the public take over more of the parental functions, as it has already taken over so much of sanitation and education, or shall it, by payments to mothers, emphasize home values? Each of these alternatives claims its advocates, but, as Mr. Rubinow has so clearly pointed out, the problem of economic independence is not the same for the middle and professional class woman as for the working-class woman. For the former, economic independence means freedom to enter some congenial occupation. For the latter, on the other hand, it would ordinarily mean work in factory or shop under conditions which are likely to be physically exhausting and not mentally stimulating.

With the middle class or professional family there seems no reason why all should follow a uniform rule. On this I venture to repeat what I have written before: "If both husband and wife carry on gainful occupations, well; if one is occupied outside the

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home and another within, well also. Which plan is followed ought to depend on which plan is better on the whole for all concerned. And this will depend largely on the woman's own ability and tastes and upon the number and age of the children. But the economic relation is not the essential thing. The essential thing is that the economic be made subordinate to the larger conception of a common good."

As regards those women who would enter factory and shop, there are probably already too many rather than too few employed. Legislation which decreases the number of hours is important, so far as it goes, but I cannot believe that, for the great majority of women, such outside work is either necessary or desirable from the point of view of their own lives or the welfare of the family. There is usually no great objection on the part of the husband in working-class families to the extra wage, although not all husbands take such a high stand as the husband of my neighbor's laundress. He declares his principle to be that he will not live with any woman who does not support him. This might be regarded as standing so erect as to lean backward.

The great point on which more positive ethics for the working-class family should center, I repeat, is a higher standard of living, a higher wage and better house, better opportunities for play, and longer and better education for the children. The striking testimony of Henry Ford as to his experience may not warrant us in any sweeping optimism that a minimum wage of five dollars a day would be a key to every form of family difficulty. It is doubtless true, as claimed, that prostitution may not be in large measure the simple consequence of direct economic pressure upon the woman worker. None the less it is true that prostitutes are not recruited in any large proportion from the well-to-do or the well-educated classes. Children who grow up in a comfortable home with intelligent parents have a multitude of fences and supports about them to steady them through the troublous years from childhood into manhood and womanhood. The lack of privacy, decency, comfort, and of resources in which great multitudes of our city children are now brought up is a far stronger menace to family life than any ethical—or unethical—theory or any frequency of

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divorce, and when we have remedied some of these conditions, we can speak more confidently as to the next thing.

On the question of public care versus home provision it may seem that the tendency is decisive. The nurse is better trained than the average mother; the teacher is far better informed than either parent. Industry removes the father from the home; in well-to-do families it takes active occupations away from the wife, and in poorer families forces the mother into outside occupations; if, now, in addition science deals the last blow by saying that children can be better provided for collectively, are we not putting our money on the wrong horse if we back the family?

For one, I am not in love with the alternative. I do not see in our modern hours of industry, our preposterous flats and city crowding, the ultimate goal of civilization. I do not think children can dispense with parents. Still less do I think parents can afford to lose the responsibility, the direct education, and the joy of association with children.

In a word, to quote Ellen Key once more, "It is not the family that ought to be abolished, but the rights of the family that must be reformed; not education by parents that ought to be avoided, but education of parents that must be introduced; not the home that ought to be done away with, but homelessness that must cease."*

If our present industrial trend were inevitable and irremediable, I doubt if it would be worth while to discuss the ethics of the family. But this Conference does not easily admit bad conditions to be inevitable. It has attacked child labor. It has seen the beginning of aid to mothers in keeping their families together. It has seen the hours of many kinds of labor reduced to permit home life. City housing may seem so tremendous an obstacle that it cannot be overcome, but though I do not expect to see cities of homes replace cities of flats, there may be some of our number who will. Eugenics is likely to make mistakes, but it shows signs of promise. Great employers of labor do not all, like Mr. Roberts, of the steel corporation, regard it as "a purely academic question" whether a twelve-hour day permits family

* Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage*, p. 240.

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and civic life.* Higher education will perhaps not always insist upon identical curricula for men and women. Democracy in national life steadies as it grows older. So will democracy in family life. The ethics of the family may, therefore, frame a positive program of freer discussion and education. It may set as its ideal higher standards of fitness for marriage, of equality, fidelity, and affection in marriage, and of joy in children. It may magnify not only the mission of the soul to refine the sense, but that of the sense to give power and enhancement to the soul. And finally it will not need to adopt Plato's grades of value with their implied depreciation of family relations. All men, says Plato, crave immortality. Some seek for immortality through the offspring of their bodies; others are creative in their minds and their offspring is the nobler. Rather we may say the nobler ideal for men and women is to be creative in both mind and body. Certainly the family will not thrive by denying either mind or body, but by uniting the two.

* *Iron Age*, February 22, 1912, p. 482.

**THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE
FAMILY IDEAL**

SAMUEL McCHORD CROTHERS

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE FAMILY IDEAL

BY SAMUEL McCORD CROTHERS

DOCTOR HOLMES began the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" with the sentence, "As I was about to remark when I was interrupted." That is the way in which philanthropists and reformers must begin in this year 1915. They cannot report orderly progress. This has been the year of the great interruption. It is no accident that we are asked to consider the year as well as the subject for discussion. Everything is influenced by the great war. Shakespeare's words come to us with a solemn meaning:

"Reckoning time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong minds to the course of altering things."

In this year strong minds have been diverted from the plans which they had made in peaceful times. Wherever people meet they are conscious of the altering things. A little while ago they were discussing the next step in civilization. Now they are asking, what can be saved from the wreck of civilization?

But it is an evidence of the sanity of social workers that they do not yield easily to despair.

After we have recovered from the first shock we take for granted not only that something can be saved out of the ruin of civilization, but that there is a forward step. Even in the world as it is to-day there are things to be done sanely and cheerfully. It is not because we underestimate the tremendous tragedy and the tremendous danger of the times that we come with the cheerful courage to take up the business of philanthropy, "as usual." The Prophet Jeremiah has a poor reputation as an optimist, because, seeing the immediate evils that were about him, he called attention to them; seeing Nebuchadnezzar and his hosts about to

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besiege Jerusalem, he did not shut his eyes, but would rather go to prison than say that Nebuchadnezzar was not a reality. But the Prophet Jeremiah, though he was not an optimist, was an exceedingly shrewd and clear-headed man of business, and when Nebuchadnezzar and his hosts were at the gates of Jerusalem, he thought this was a very good time to buy real estate, and so he tells us, in one remarkable chapter, how he saw a good bit of land that was about to be sold cheap, and he called the notary and the witnesses, and he bought that land. And he remarked to those that were about him, "Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land."

Now that is the way we feel, all of us, in regard to the next steps in the great forward movement of humanity. After all, a war is but an incident in the history of humanity—though a terrible incident. In this year we go about our business as usual, trying to see what is necessary for the peaceful, prosperous evolution of mankind.

When we come to discuss the family in this year nineteen hundred and fifteen, it must be in relation to what is now happening. Usually we have been tremulous and anxious in regard to the family as something that must be protected. This year we turn to it as something to protect us. We seek to learn the secret of its strength, and to apply that power.

For of all human institutions, the family is the oldest and the toughest in its fiber. It is because it is strong that it has held its own in the constant struggle for existence. There may be conventionality in the explanations that may from time to time be given of it, but the thing itself is based not on something artificial, but on that which is most primitive. It is held together by the most primitive and powerful passion.

When Brer Rabbit was thrown into the brier patch, he was not alarmed, but cried cheerily—"Bred and born in de brier patch, Brer Fox!"

The family was born in the brier patch of barbarism. It is familiar with its passions and its cruelties. If it has emerged, it has been because of its inherent force. There is nothing in human experience which it has not passed through.

In one sense the family is the cause of war. It is what men

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fight for. The warrior has his highest incentive to prowess when he fights to protect his home.

In another and a larger sense the family ideal is that which brings lasting peace. It offers the only sufficient bond to unite individuals and to win them to coöperation. The word kindness is but another form of kin-ness. It indicates our true attitude to those who are kin to us. These are our "relations." The sense of human relations begins with the family. I must love and help those who belong to my family or clan. Primitive ethics is based on the solidarity of the family. The Shunamite woman in the Old Testament answers simply, "I dwell with mine own people."

When other tribes threaten ours, there is war. But within the bonds of kinship there is peace.

Let us look at the bond which unites the family. The essential thing is the relation which is established between the strong and the weak. When people talk of the man and the superman, they take it for granted that the superman will use his strength for his own development. Being strong, he will make himself stronger at the expense of the weak.

But in the family the parent is the superman. The child is utterly weak and ignorant. He cannot compete in any way.

Does the parent then feel that he may conserve his strength at the expense of the child? Is he tempted to take advantage of one weaker than himself? The law of the family forbids.

It is seen that, from the very nature of the family, strength and weakness do not inhere in the individual. Each one of us begins in weakness, grows through the help of our nearest of kin to such measure of strength as maturity may bring, and then sinks into weakness again. Each one in turn is protector and in need of protection. There is no permanently strong member of the group. The strength of the group itself depends upon the recognition of the common need.

When the father and mother are at the height of their capacity for work, they are working for their children, on whom they expect to rely in their old age. They are thinking of to-morrow and of the day after to-morrow. In caring for their children the parents are preparing for themselves happiness in

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the days to come. In honoring the parent the child is honoring his own future.

Out of this has evolved a relation in which gifts are given and received without pride on the part of the benefactor, or servility on the part of the beneficiary. It is a mutual benefit society in which, in the end, all share alike. No one is pauperized by what he receives as a member of a family. There is no loss of self-respect in receiving favors from one's own father. Other organizations emphasize differences in strength and ability. In the family each member passes through all stages and has a recognized place and duty at each successive stage.

How can this family ideal be given larger scope and be made more effective? It can only be a growth from within. There must be a clear and strong sense of actual relationship. No matter how scientific we are in our methods, or how zealous we may be in our labor, we can find no substitute for the sense of actual kinship.

When we try to do good to persons with whom we feel that we are not kin, we cannot but be patronizing or condescending. Our manner betrays our inner thought. They resent the attempts made in their behalf. What right have these aliens to interfere with their affairs?

The possibility of genuine coöperation comes only when there is an appeal to a family motive. The individual then loses himself in labor for the group to which he belongs.

Thomas Fuller, in dedicating one of his books to a youth of a noble family, tells him that England in every generation had a Montagu who took a noble part in his country's history. Every family has, he said, its beginners, its continuers, its forwarders, and its ruiners. He urges the lad not to be content to be a mere continuer of the family fortunes. He must have the ambition to be a forwarder. He must be willing and eager to begin where his fathers left off, and so push the family fortunes forward. There can be no stronger appeal to generous youth than this. It is the complete identification of themselves with those from whom they derive life itself. The son simply goes forward to fulfil the task his father began.

The need for an enlargement of the family ideal appeals to

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us in this year nineteen hundred and fifteen with an earnestness and a cogency that perhaps have never been felt before. How far can this simple ideal of the family relation, a relation not merely of the weak or of the strong, but a relation in which weakness is ever growing into strength and strength passing again into dependency—how can that perfectly natural bond be enlarged? I said that the family and the clan have in them the seeds both of peace and of war. The family as against other families means war. The family ideal enlarged, rationalized, made effective, is the thing which unites us in the great effort which we are making for the welfare of mankind. All other organizations are weak simply because they are the organizations of the few for the benefit of the many.

Whenever we think that our work is simply to gather together the strong, the clear-headed, the refined, the prosperous, the intellectual classes for the benefit of other classes of the community, then our very good will be evil spoken of. What right, it is asked, have you to patronize us? What right have you, the prosperous classes of the community, to set yourselves above us and then reach down to us? It is just because so much philanthropic work is so understood, it is because the real family feeling has not entered into our own hearts so as to be the controlling motive, that there is such misconception of our efforts. Suppose we all of us come to an absolutely different notion. The mere difference of education, the difference of condition, the accidents of life, these are nothing in themselves. What does it matter whether I as an individual have certain advantages or not? I grew out of helpless infancy. I return again at last to a state where no longer can I be an efficient power in the world, but the world goes on. The family to which I belong goes on. It is possible for me to take my place and do my part, and only in that do I find any advantage whatever in living.

The call of our kin is the most powerful of human motives. The question for us is whether we can make it effective for constructive work. Who are our kin, those for whom we gladly live and for whom we would gladly die? Time was when the only effective sense of kinship was in the clan warring against other clans. Now the nation conceived of as a larger clan has that

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compelling power. The nation calls, and the citizen answers, "I come!"

But now we are conscious of the need of a larger loyalty, based on a compelling sense of kinship. There is something beyond the nation—it is mankind. The call of the human comes to us. It is not a mere intellectual generalization, this idea of mankind. It is a fact of our real relations to one another. As the world becomes smaller it is impossible to deny these relations. We need to understand and interpret them. All philanthropy is a recognition of this larger kinship, with its call for disinterested service. We have great allies. Religion, when purified from tribal superstitions, is a powerful enforcement of the family ideal. Its great prayer begins with "Our Father" and ends with the proclamation of a social gospel, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory." Let that prayer be realized, and we are conscious of belonging to one great family.

Modern philosophy is on our side. It has ceased to emphasize differences which once seemed absolute. Life flows in different channels, but it is flowing from the same source. To be alive is to be akin to all that lives.

And happily to the modern world there has come a new power which tends to unity. Science is no respecter of persons. It speaks a common language, and one free from the superstition and prejudice of past years. It does not take into account the distinctions yours and mine, save as they are related to eternal law. You go about your work, work for the survey of conditions, work for the study of facts. It seems passionless, it seems to be but little, that technique of which we speak. And yet the ultimate effect of that study, painstaking and careful and fearless, is the actual change of those conditions. It demonstrates to us our kinship, that we are all of a kind, and that the law for one must be the law for all. Religion long ago declared its sublime message that we are children of one Father. Philosophy long ago made the best men feel that nothing human can be foreign to the man of thought. Now, not from one side, but from thousands of investigators, the idea is brought home to us that it is absolutely impossible for any one to live a life of unrelated virtue. That only is good which makes for the common good.

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We know not what shall be. We know not through what tragedies our world must pass before it learns the simple lesson of how men and women and children are to live together in this world. We do know, however, this, that within certain limits the way has been found, and that it is not the way by which the strong trample on the weak and so grow stronger. It is the way father and mother and brother and sister actually live in the well-ordered home. We, interested in the complex conditions of the larger world, are we not all united on this, that we are all trying, each in his own way, to bring the larger world into the relation of members of one family?

The National Conference of Charities and Correction

The addresses printed in this pamphlet are two of the 116 delivered at the 47 different sessions of the Forty-second National Conference of Charities and Correction, which was held at Baltimore for a week in May, 1915. This Conference is an outgrowth of the Social Science Association, and was originally a gathering of members of the few state boards of charities which were in existence in the '70's. Its membership now represents every variety of social service activity, voluntary and governmental, and every shade of religious and social opinion. Any one interested in its objects is eligible for membership, and all members are entitled to its Bulletins and volumes of Proceedings.

Many of the social reforms now well established in America were first advocated at this Conference, which exists to discuss social problems and disseminate information with regard to them, but does not formulate platforms.

The sessions of 1916 will be held at Indianapolis. Annual membership for those who join in 1915, \$2.50; after January 1, 1916, \$3.00; sustaining membership, \$10.00.

Address for further information about publications, membership, program of the next Conference, etc.,

Wm. T. Cross, General Secretary,
315 PLYMOUTH COURT, CHICAGO, ILL.





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